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Executive Summary

SOCIAL ASSESSMENT for the Kootenai National Forest

1995

United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

Kootenai National Forest

506 U.S. Highway 2 West
Libby, Montana
59923

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United States Department of Agriculture | **Forest Service** | **Kootenai NF** | **506 US Highway 2 West Libby, MT 59923**

Reply to: 1620

Date: October 6, 1995

Dear Cooperators,

The Kootenai National Forest is pleased to send you a summary of its recently released social assessment. The assessment compiles into one document the wide variety of viewpoints on natural resource management held by members of our communities and provides suggestions for using those viewpoints to strengthen the relationship between the Forest Service and local communities. The private contracting firm of Impact Assessment, Inc. researched and wrote the 318-page document.

Designed to gauge public sentiment about forest management and other issues, the assessment was not an opinion poll, but a way to listen to the concerns of local residents. The participants discussed what was most important to them, knowing the Forest Service would hear what they said.

Compiled from confidential interviews with over 100 people, mainly in Lincoln and Sanders Counties, the assessment also offers a good background and history of the local communities. We found the document to be informative and honest. The comments were not always complimentary, but that's ok. We need to know what people are thinking and where we can improve. This assessment will help us do that.

We appreciate each participant's willingness to spend time with the interviewer. The insight they provided will be invaluable as the forest designs an action plan to meet local needs and implement the Forest Plan. The assessment shows that we can build on the common ground we all share--a strong commitment to the land.

Additional copies of the summary and a limited number of the complete assessment are available at the Forest Supervisor's Office in Libby or at Ranger Stations. The assessment may also be reviewed at local libraries.

Further information or copies of the assessment may be obtained by contacting Bob Krepps or Joan Dickerson at the Kootenai Forest Supervisor's Office at 406-293-6211.

Sincerely,

Stephen J. Solem

STEPHEN J. SOLEM
Forest Supervisor

enclosure (1)

ABSTRACT

This report is a social assessment prepared for the Supervisors Office, Kootenai National Forest in Libby, Montana. The report was prepared as part of the process of revising the existing Forest Plan for the Kootenai National Forest. A major objective of the report is to describe public perceptions regarding forest management issues and the social, cultural, and economic factors that influence these perceptions. The study for this report used multiple data collection methods, including archival and ethnographic techniques. The report describes the socioeconomic characteristics of communities surrounding the Kootenai National Forest, past studies relevant to the assessment of current conditions, public assessments of natural resources in the region, and concerns about specific forest management issues, including ecosystems management. The report concludes that stakeholders in the region share many values about natural resources, but they also have important differences in their perceptions about the use of these resource. These shared and common values in combination with changed socioeconomic conditions from the recent past result in diverse views about forest management practices.

Prepared under contract to the
USDA Forest Service by
Impact Assessment, Incorporated
La Jolla, California

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The Kootenai National Forest (KNF) is conducting a social assessment as part of the process of revising the 1987 Land Resources Management plan. This social assessment is intended to provide information about how stakeholders and opinion leaders in surrounding communities perceive the resources of the KNF and their management. This information includes an assessment of some of the social factors that influence the types of issues that concern stakeholders in the study area.

The report has eight chapters. Chapter one states the objectives of the study and the issues for achieving each objective. Chapter two presents an overview of the KNF and the socioeconomic conditions, land uses, and population characteristics in the surrounding communities. Chapter three discusses significant findings from previous studies of the socioeconomic conditions, attitudes, and opinions about forest use and management. Chapter four presents a brief overview of the methods, procedures, and sampling used in this study. Chapter five presents data about the socioeconomic and cultural factors in Lincoln County communities that influence responses to forest management. Chapter six presents data for Sanders County similar to that discussed for Lincoln County in chapter five. Chapter seven is a discussion of findings regarding a Kootenai Tribe perspective on forest management issues. Chapter eight is a summary of the major points of the study and their relationship to the overall study objectives. Readers interested in only a summary of findings and implications should begin with chapter eight.

TECHNICAL APPROACH

A working hypothesis of this study, supported by other research (cf., Carroll 1995,) is that social factors influence how individuals and community groups evaluate forest management issues. We therefore collected data about the socioeconomic conditions and cultural values in the study region that this evaluation process for the KNF. Specifically, we collected economic, labor force, and population information about the study area as well perceptions about the nature of community life, the characteristics of social relationships within communities, and information regarding the values and other perceptions about natural resources. These data are part of the context the study communities that may shape responses to forest management issues. We also examined public assessments of the Forest Service and its management of the KNF. These perceptions are relevant for this study since other research suggests that perceptions of trust in government agencies influence how publics respond to specific management or regulatory issues (cf., Dunlap, Kraft, and Rosa, 1993). Consequently, stakeholder assessments of trust in the Forest Service and its management style were also examined for this study.

Data collection for this study was guided by an *ethnographic* approach. This approach is built around the idea that the way of life of a people and how they evaluate their world are facts to be discovered and not assumed. An important corollary to this idea is that a particular way of life is best understood from the point of view of persons living within a particular social setting. This requires data collection techniques that focus on getting information about how people define and explain the issues of importance from their point of view. This may be a very different view that what a researcher or government agency may perceive to be of interest or important. The ethnographic approach is usually highly inductive: that is, the theories, axioms, or findings about a circumstance derive from an examination of data about it. Social scientists who use this approach often describe this strategy as the use of "grounded theory" (*cf.* Strauss and Corbin 1990) because theories or findings result from data about it and are therefore "grounded in the data." Ethnographic approaches are well-suited to situations where a goal is to discover the views about particular issues and the connections of those perceptions to the social context in which they live. For this purposes of this study, ethnographic methods are a valid and useful approach. Note that this approach may identify local perceptions about issues that may or may not be consistent with the views of the Forest Service or the realities regarding specific forest management issues, agency participation in the communities of the region, and other factual matters. However, the identification of perceptions that vary from the facts as perceived by the Forest Service offers an opportunity to discover the reasons for why these differences exist.

This ethnographic approach was implemented by using an interview protocol to collect *qualitative data* from a *targeted sample* of individuals within the study area of Lincoln and portions of Sanders Counties. Members of the Kootenai Tribe were also interviewed since they have both current and historical connections to the KNF. The interview protocol asked questions about community structure and values, views about natural resources, views about the Forest Service and forest management, understandings and evaluations of ecosystems management, and views about public participation. The qualitative data that resulted from this work is intended to identify the types and ranges of issues of concern within the region. These data are not quantitative measures of the opinions of the total population. Such a determination would require a different type of study methodology that was not specified for this work. The interviews were conducted between November 1994 and January 1995. Approximately 119 persons were interviewed using the protocol, although other persons were present in some of these interviews and also made contributions that became part of the overall data included for analysis. A total of about 135 persons made contributions to the data based on the interview protocol. The table below indicates the distribution of persons interviewed.

Number of Participants by Area				
County	Area	Interviewees	Additional Participants	Total
Lincoln County	Libby, Troy, Yaak	56	4	60
	Trego, Fortine, Eureka	23	1	24
	Total County	79	5	84
Sanders County		35	11	46
Kootenai Tribe [Flathead Indian Reservation]		5	0	4
Total		119	16	135

Note: In addition to the 135 participants counted in this table, contacts were made through brief "verification" interviews which were conducted to further develop and check specific issues.

Interviews ranged from about 45 minutes to several hours. Some interviews involved taking field trips with study participants to observe features of the forest which they indicated were important in order to understand their point of view. Several persons were interviewed multiple times in order to check other data collected.

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Socioeconomic conditions within the study region are part of the social context that can shape responses to public issues, including those regarding forest management. These conditions, in part, explain why some groups or individuals may find particular issues more important than others; or, they result in different responses to the same issue. Consequently, we examined available socioeconomic data that might provide insights about the socioeconomic status and trends that prevail in the study region.

northwest Montana is experiencing social, economic and population changes that are sensitizing residents to the use of natural resources. This sensitization is itself a consequence of multiple factors that collectively suggest that a previous way of life based on "timber culture" may be either lost or substantially altered.

- The population of the region shows a modest decline between 1970 and 1990, but updated 1993 population estimates indicates a substantial population increase.

- Population composition is changing in part because of an in-migration of new residents and an out-migration of established residents or their adult children. Older residents are accounting for an increasingly larger portion of the total population of the region.

- The costs of social programs and services have steadily increased.

- Employment opportunities are declining because of a decrease in mining and timber industry activity.

- Despite a downward trend in employment, the total number of housing units has increased, average number of persons per household has decreased, and the average value of real estate has increased.

- The timber basis of community economies is changing. The total number of timber industry companies has declined, there is uncertainty about the economic viability of the timber industry, the total value of wood products sold has declined, and the current trend is downward.

- Agriculture is a small but nonetheless significant portion of the region's economy. The total number of agriculture operations has deceased but the value of products sold has shown a steady upward trend, with livestock production accounting for a major contribution to this upward trend.

- Multiple economic activities allow many small scale businesses to exist. In fact, residents emphasize the necessity to "piece together" a living, and often one of those piece has some basis in the uses of the resources of the KNF. The loss of even a small portion of total income for such business can have major consequences.

- There is a significant economic dependency of the region on the resources of the Kootenai National Forest.

- Economic diversity is a significant goal of the region given the changing nature of the timber industry and the current downward trend of the total value of wood products produced.

Overall, the socioeconomic conditions of this region suggest that population is changing such that in-migration is accounting for an increasingly larger percentage of population growth; natural resource industries that are based on extraction or harvesting are declining; economic diversification is perceived as an alternative to the timber industry that supported a "timber culture" in the region. Increasingly, the trends in current socioeconomic conditions are evaluated as sources of change for the region's timber culture.

Land Use

- Land use in the region is dominated by the existence of the forest lands. Federal and state owned lands account for more than 90% of all lands in Lincoln County and a major portion of lands in Sanders County.

- Harvesting and extracting natural resources is a major land use in the region. Timber harvesting is the largest among these, and large scale mining has significantly declined in recent years.

- Recreational and tourism are increasingly important land uses in the region.

- Ranching and agriculture have traditionally been important uses of land in the region. Recently, however, land has been taken out of agricultural use and put into subdivision and housing developments. This trend tends to feed on itself, in that as the demand for land to develop increases, land prices increase, assessed value increases, taxes increase, and agricultural land becomes more expensive to maintain and more tempting to sell for profit.

- With the breakup of farms and ranches, there is lessening reliance on local resources for local income. Combined with a lack of timber sales on public lands, this has raised concerns about the apparent loosening of ties between the local economy and locally-available resources.

- It is understood that people are moving to this area primarily because of what are variously termed as "way of life," "quality of life," or "lifestyle" issues that are based on the characteristics of the lands in this region.

The overall land mass of the KNF and its multiple uses by timber, agriculture, recreationalists, and others in the region results in a significant investment in and dependence upon KNF resources. The effect of this pattern of land use is a broad based interest throughout the region in how forest management decisions influence issues as broad as the regional economy and as narrow as an individual's concerns about the habitat conditions of a favorite hunting sport.

SOCIOCULTURAL PERCEPTIONS AND VALUES ABOUT COMMUNITY

Communities in different parts of the study region have strong local identifies that need to be taken into consideration when management decisions are made about the KNF. Accompanying these strong local identifies are some commonalities in how these communities function as entities. These commonalities concern values about what a community should be and characteristics of social relationships that affect social integration and participation in issues of concern to community members. These types of issues also address the context of the study region; and this overall context is what shapes needs, wants, and desires regarding forest management issues. Understanding the overall context and some of the specifics regarding how it works offers some insights that may be useful in the process of developing public input regarding forest management decisions.

Values about Community

The values about "community in the study region are based on attachment to the natural beauty and resources of the region and on shared perceptions about an "idealized rural community" and an outdoor lifestyle. The value of KNF landscapes and resources is highly important and widely shared. These values invest individuals in the landscape and the lifestyle that becomes intertwined with its use. Such values become an important reason stakeholders are motivated to live in northwest Montana. There are also shared values about "community" and specifically an idealized view of the rural Montana community. This idealized view portrays a closely knit, mutually supportive, safe environment in which children can be raised in a family and community atmosphere. The values about community in this view also support the pursuit of self-reliance, independence, and the exercise of personal freedom. This idealized view of what a community should be may not always be the reality. However, the reality of community life are not diminished by the shared expectations about what it should be. These shared expectations are a force of integration within communities where there are characteristics of social relationships that promote segmentation. Another important integrating force in these communities is shared values and expressions of "an outdoor lifestyle." The salience of hunting, fishing, hiking, and myriad other outdoor pursuits expresses the significance of this lifestyle in local culture. It also ties individuals, families, and groups to concerns about natural resources that impinge on their lifestyle, their sense of place, and their values about community.

Social Characteristics of Communities

The characteristics of social relationships in the study region are observable in the types of social groupings that exist and in what people say about their connections to others and their overall participation in community life. The characteristics of social groupings are relevant for this study because they affect the potential for community integration and the degree of homogeneity in response to issues of importance to a community. Similarly, the characteristics also influence how people interact as individuals and participate in the issues of importance to their community. The findings summarized below address the types of social groupings, their characteristics, and attributes of social relationships in the study area.

The major types of social groupings within the study region are: territory or locality based groups (communities); formal organizations; clubs; volunteer organizations; parent-based organizations; churches; identified cliques or sub-groups; special interest groups; and, newcomers and oldtimers. The integration of groups within the community is influenced by a "satellite-hub" process. "Hub" relationships are those that tie different groups and individuals together, much like the hub that connects spokes in a wagon wheel. Hub relationships tend to be cross-cutting, that is their ties tend to cut across different groups to which they belong. The more interconnections among groups, the more there tends to be a hub relationship. These relationships promote a tightly integrated community. "Satellite" relationships refers to loosely connected associations among individuals and groups. A group exhibiting satellite attributes tends to have a singe purpose, and there are few connections with other groups. Individuals belonging to satellite groups tend to

participate in a few groups and there are few cross-cutting ties with other individuals and groups. The loose connections among satellite groups results in a less tightly knit community. Currently, communities tend to have more characteristics of a satellite rather than a hub type community.

Individuals in these communities tend to have multiple types of connections with each other. That is, a boss might also be a hunting partner as well as a fellow church congregation member. These multiple types of connections in social relationships tend to make face-to-face relationship more complicated than in those situations where there is only a single interest in the connection between individuals. Such multiplex relationships tend to act as a break on social conflicts and on participating in situations where social conflicts are possible.

The interview data for this study suggest that there is an ethic of conditional participation in community activities. This ethic supports limited participation in community activities among those individuals who do not wish to be involved in group activities or in only a narrow range of activities. Individuals can participate in a narrow range of "satellite" groups and perceive that they are "involved" in their community; this ethic of conditional participation also means that they do not feel compelled to participate in other community-wide activities. Public involvement programs need to consider this ethic of conditional participation and its relationship to other values and characteristics of groups in these communities.

Reference groups in these communities tend to be those based on territory and focused mutual interests. This is not to say, for example, that people in Eureka do not know and associate with people in Troy; nevertheless, residents tend to associate based on kinship, neighborhood, church membership, a common work place, or on common activities in which they participate. These reference groups are more often than not the ones that people are concerned about when they evaluate issues of concern to them. Furthermore, because these reference groups are local, those influences that are external to these communities are viewed with some caution, if not concern. In the past reference groups were often based on affiliation with one part or another of the timber or mining industry. Increasingly reference groups have a more diverse character resulting in less social homogeneity than in the past.

Individuals often have numerous brief interactions with a wide range of people. These brief interactions promote a sense of connection among those who are "known" in some way to each other. These seemingly casual interactions result in a perception of social connection, although such connections do not necessarily result in a tightly knit community. Nonetheless, along with a sense of shared values, ongoing face-to-face relationship constitute an major feature of social relationships that result in feelings of community in northwest Montana.

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE FOREST SERVICE

Public perceptions about the Forest Service and evaluations of its management of the KNF are issues that have to be considered in the context of a local culture that prefers limited government. Yet the very dominance of land use in the region by all levels of government and the Forest Service in particular results in a prominence of the agency that is at odds with a culture that prefers limited government influence in their lives. The views expressed about the Forest Service in this report need to be considered in this context. That is, this context tends to exacerbate negative responses to government in general.

Analysis of the data regarding public perceptions regarding the forest service can be organized into the following summary statements.

- There is limited trust in the Forest Service as an agency, although stakeholders trust specific individuals with whom they have ongoing working relationships.

- The Forest Service is perceived as too rigid in adherence to regulations and as exhibiting a too inflexible bureaucratic style for working with local stakeholders.

- The Forest Service favors timber interests at the expense of recreational and other types of uses of the resources of the Kootenai National Forest.

- "New" forest managers have insufficient on-the-ground knowledge to make effective decisions about management issues. "New" forest managers rely on "book knowledge" whereas the "older" managers relied on practical experience. The agency is being diminished by the loss of the older types of managers.

- Forest managers disregard or under-use local knowledge and expertise about natural resources and their management. The rejection of this local expertise works against effective management of forest resources.

- Decision making is too centralized; District Rangers should have more power to make decisions that affect their areas of responsibility.

- The Forest Service is paralyzed by its concern about taking any action that will be opposed by "pressure groups." This paralysis needs to be addressed for their to be effective forest management and renewed trust in the agency.

- Most interview data would indicate that residents recognize the complexity involved in trying to manage resources to suit the needs of different local and non-local constituencies. This, of course, is not unique to the Forest Service; as with resource management issues in other small communities, there is to a degree an inherent tension and a need for a balance to be struck between those perceived as "locals" and "outsiders" managing resources.

These types of evaluations should not be unexpected given the cultural values of these communities and specifically the prevailing preferences for limited government.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that criticisms are often more volunteered than positive assessments of a government agency. This type of study can therefore suggest that there is more distrust and concern about the Forest Service than might be the case. Yet, given the criticisms and concerns expressed by a wide range of stakeholders, the finding that stands out the most to the research team is the expectations among stakeholders that the Forest Service is the agency that has the skills and science to manage the KNF so that it is of benefit to all users. Given the past conflicts among various stakeholder groups, the Forest Service is currently perceived as perhaps the only source of solutions to concerns and problems that frustrate many stakeholder groups. However, the perceptions regarding trust in the agency, its style of interaction with stakeholders, and its future effectiveness in dealing with "pressure groups" of all types will be important determinants of how publics evaluate not only the agency but also its overall evaluation of important forest management issues.

RESOURCES OF THE KNF

Investment in the management of the KNF is in part related to how people view and use these resources. And, perceptions about the values and attributes of the forest provide insight into how individuals and groups think about management of forest resources. Individuals also develop stakes in forest management and respond to management decisions based on patterns of use.

Perceptions About the KNF

The KNF is widely valued for the variety of its natural beauty, recreational opportunities, and economic potentials. There are a diversity of views about what are the important resources and the special places within the forest. Analysis of the interview data suggested that the diversity of these views could be organized by four perspectives or orientations.

(1) The "bedrock" view, which is widely shared, emphasizes the inherent value of the natural beauty of the region's flora, fauna, and water resources. These resources motivate individuals to live in the region and they are the basis for an outdoor lifestyle that itself is central to how individuals define their personal identify. The core of the bedrock perspective is the inherent value of these resources.

(2) The "use" perspective emphasizes that natural resources should be used for the benefit of man. While this view emphasizes resource use, especially for man's benefit, it also entailed is the notion that forest lands, wildlife, and all other resources must be managed and not left to "Mother Mature's whims." Further, the use perspective incorporates the idea that natural resources should not be "wasted."

(3) The "preservation" perspective emphasizes that natural resources need to be conserved and managed with concern for natural processes. This view includes the perspective that natural resources can and should be used. However, there should be a

strong emphasis on the conservation of resources and the restoration of damaged resources.

(4) The conservation perspective promotes various types of uses, but no one use at the expense of another. The conservation perspective emphasizes ideas such as "sustained yield," "multiple use," and overall environmental quality. In this view natural resources are truly perceived as capable of serving economic, recreational, spiritual, and other needs. These needs can and should be served such that all users of these resources are treated fairly. This perspective more than any other stresses the idea of "balance" in the value and use of resources and it entails the idea that resources can be conserved as well as used for logging and other economic purposes.

Uses of the Kootenai National Forest

The uses of the natural resources of the Kootenai National Forest result in individuals having economic, spiritual, recreational, and lifestyle stakes in its natural resources. The major types of uses indicated by the interview data for this study are as follows:

- *Subsistence activities* include gathering (for example, huckleberries, mushrooms, and firewood), hunting, fishing and other personal/family uses of the natural resources of the KNF. Subsistence uses are economically important and they are also significant because they allow the expression of a lifestyle in which the harvesting of such resources is highly valued.

- *Harvesting natural resources for economic purposes* is also a significant use of the Kootenai National Forest. Logging and mining are the prototypes of this type of use, but it also includes the commercial harvesting of mushrooms and huckleberries.

- *Grazing* livestock is important to ranchers who use National Forest lands to supplement the feeding of their cattle and other animals.. The viability of most medium to larger scale operations depends on access to these lands.

- *Recreational* uses include viewing, hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, horse back riding, and the full range of recreational activities of residents in northwestern Montana. These types of uses constitute the major reason for many residents to live in this area.

- *Spiritual uses* are important for members of the Kootenai Tribe as well as for other residents of northwestern Montana. The Kootenai Tribe continues to use the KNF as a site for vision quest activities and other religious purposes. Other residents derive non-material, or spiritual benefits from both "knowing it is there" and from their use of these lands.

Many individuals use the KNF in multiple ways, thereby compounding their stakes in the management decisions about the forest.

PERCEPTIONS OF FOREST MANAGEMENT ISSUES

This study identified a wide range of issues of concern to residents. Some of these concerns are idiosyncratic while others appear to be wide shared. Analysis of the data indicate that the major concerns about forest management can be grouped into the following categories:

- Roads
  - Road standards are too high and need to be rethought for economic reasons.
  - While there is some strong feeling against road closures, there is also support for the need for road closures to protect game and game habitat. Among most stakeholders there is criticism of the process of how road closures are decided and a feeling of a need for more consultation with stakeholders about how to achieve the objectives of road closures.
- Timber Harvest Levels
  - There are alternative perceptions that (1) too much wood has been cut from the forest, and there needs to be further consideration of sustainable cutting of the timber resources in the forest; and (2) there is timber that can and should be cut in the Kootenai National Forest but it should be accomplished in a sustainable manner.
- Clearcuts and Selective Harvests
  - Clearcutting is a harvesting tool with limited applications. Selective harvesting results in a sustainable cut and, as "environmentally friendly," is a preferred harvesting method.
  - Clearcutting has political liabilities that damage the future of the loggers and other non-corporate stakeholders among timber interests.
- Appeals of Timber Sales
  - The appeals process is perceived to be working against effective forest management by most stakeholders other than environmentalist.
  - A more reasonable appeals process will consider the "weighting" of various stakeholders and especially "local" interests.
  - A more reasonable appeals process will insert much needed predictability into the process of timber harvesting and the stakeholders who are economically dependent on it.

- Fires and Salvage Logging

  - Stakeholders perceive the Forest Service was effective in its response to the 1994 fires. There are some complaints about waste of resources in responding to the fire and the speed of response in some areas, but overall stakeholders have a favorable evaluation of the fire fighting effort.

  - More local residents should have been used in fighting the fire.

  - Community and timber stakeholders have strong views that fire damaged timber needs to be salvaged or it will be "wasted."

  - Environmental stakeholders are concerned that there may be damage to other resources in any harvesting of fire-damaged timber.

  - The buildup of bug-damaged timber and other downed timber presents a fire hazard that can threaten communities more than did the fires of 1994.

- Wildlife Management

  - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has too much control over the Forest Service and its management of lands within the Kootenai National Forest.

  - Most species of wildlife in the National Forest are valued as an important contribution to the quality of life in northwest Montana.

  - Game species are highly favored by stakeholders, and predators are generally considered competitors.

  - Residents value grizzly bears, but bear management practices that close roads and threaten to reduce the use forest lands exemplify a concern for animals more than human uses of the Kootenai National Forest.

  - The potential for the introduction of wolves into the area evokes concerns about Forest Service priorities in forest management. Management of National Forest areas primarily as endangered species habitat, particularly in the case of species introduced from outside of the area, runs directly counter to sentiments about multiple use (as it is traditionally understood and practiced by the Forest Service) as the appropriate strategy for managing local resources. Introducing predators and then "locking up" areas of the forest for their benefit, while at the same time not holding timber sales that are perceived as essential for the health of the local economy, is seen as "preferring animals over people."

- Wilderness

  - Local concerns expressed over the wilderness area issue are often a distillation of a number of other issues

  - For those who subscribe to the philosophy that a National Forest primarily represents a set of renewable resources that are set aside for periodic harvest and other multiple uses, the creation of Wilderness Areas often seems to represent "what is wrong" with Forest Service management of the public resources. That is, to those who hold this view, the National Forest is not, and should not be treated as, a National Park. The commercial use of the Kootenai National Forest's resources are the key to the local economy and to larger economies.

  - Stakeholders support the concept of wilderness, but there is some sentiment that wilderness "locks up" the land and is therefore wasteful. There is also sentiment that there is enough wilderness lands in the Kootenai National Forest and the addition of more is unnecessary.

- Appearance and Environmental Quality.

  - Two major themes emerge from the interview data about the overall appearance of the Kootenai National Forest. One is that it should have a "park-like" appearance with little or no downed timber. The second view is that the "natural" state of the forest is preferred, even if that includes heavily covered, downed, and bug-killed timber.

  - Viewsheds are important and should be considered in forest management decisions, especially those concerned with timber harvesting.

  - Clearcuts are generally perceived as ugly and undesirable. If clearcutting must be used, more concern should be given to irregular cuts rather than square "diaper" cuts that emphasize the clearcut landscape.

  - Water quality is a major concern of residents in the region. Water quality is perceived to be affected by some timber harvesting methods, roads, and mining.

  - Air quality can be adversely affected by controlled burns. Overall air quality is increasingly an important issue in portions of Lincoln County.

- Ecosystems Management

Study participants were asked directly about their knowledge regarding ecosystems management. In general, study participants expressed that they had limited to no knowledge about the concept, but it was of concern to most stakeholders. For example,

environmental stakeholders were concerned that it was a ploy to further timber cutting while timber stakeholders perceive that ecosystems management is a ploy "to lock up the forest." Publics are, however, eager for more information about the details of the concept and its application to the KNF.

SUMMARY

In general, this social assessment indicates that public responses to specific forest management issues can be determined by asking the following types of questions:

1) How is this person/stakeholder group affected by recent changes in the socioeconomic conditions of the region?

2) What is the investment of the person/stakeholder group in the community?

3) What social groups does this individual/stakeholder group belong to that might suggest how responses are being structured.

4) What perspective about natural resources does the person/group have that may suggest how they view the overall value and use of resources?

5) How are the resources of the forest used by this person/group?

6) What is the sense of trust in the agency in general and specific individuals within the agency in particular?

7) Are there other social issues, e.g. community conflict, that may influence the expectations, needs, wants, and desires about specific management issues?

These types of questions are intended to support an awareness of social dynamics that affect public responses and concerns about forest management. If any single finding is important in this report it is that management issues about the KNF are embedded with cultural values and social dynamics. The current social climate in study communities is such that effective management of the forest will be enhanced by incorporation of a perspective that considers the perspectives and local residents as one of the inputs that affect forest management. This report can foster development of that perspective, but it is not a replacement for it.